Claims

I claim:

1. A method for inducing a protective immune response against FIV infection in a susceptible host animal comprising administering to said host an effective amount of a vaccine composition that is capable of eliciting an immune response against a plurality of FIV subtypes.

2. The method, according to claim 1, wherein said vaccine composition is selected from the group consisting of FIV polypeptides derived from multiple FIV subtypes, multiple cell-free whole FIV virus, and multiple cell lines, wherein each of said cell lines is infected with an FIV strain from a different FIV subtype.

3. The method, according to claim 2, wherein said FIV virus or FIV-infected cell line is treated in a manner to inactivate said virus or said cell line prior to administration of said vaccine to said host animal.

4. The method, according to claim 2, wherein said FIV virus or FIV-infected cell line is treated in a manner to attenuate said virus or said cell line prior to administration of said vaccine to said host animal.

5. The method, according to claim 1, wherein said FIV subtype is selected from the group consisting of subtypes A, B, C and D.

6. A vaccine composition, comprising FIV immunogens, wherein said immunogens are capable of eliciting an immune response against a plurality of FIV subtypes in an FIV-susceptible animal.

7. The vaccine composition, according to claim 5, wherein said vaccine composition is selected from the group consisting of FIV polypeptides derived from multiple FIV subtypes, multiple cell-free whole FIV virus, and multiple cell lines, wherein each of said cell lines is infected with an FIV strain from a different FIV subtype.

8. The vaccine composition, according to claim 6, wherein said FIV virus or FIV-infected cell line is treated in a manner to inactivate said virus or said cell line prior to administration of said vaccine to said host animal.

9. The vaccine composition, according to claim 6, wherein said FIV virus or FIV-infected cell line is treated in a manner to attenuate said virus or said cell line prior to administration of said vaccine to said host animal.

10. A feline-derived T cell line, wherein said cell line is susceptible to infection by at least one FIV subtype, wherein said FIV subtype is selected from the group consisting of subtypes A, B, C and D.

11. The cell line, according to claim 9, wherein said cell line is designated FeT-1C.

12. The cell line, according to claim 10, wherein said cell line is infected with at least one of the FIV virus strains selected from the group consisting of FIV_{Dix}, FIV_{UK8}, FIV_{Bang}, FIV_{Aom1}, FIV_{Aom2}, FIV_{Pet}, and FIV_{Shi}.

13. The cell line, according to claim 9, wherein said cell line is IL-2 independent.

14. The cell line, according to claim 13, wherein said cell line is infected with at least one of the FIV virus strains selected from the group consisting of FIV_{Dix}, FIV_{UK8}, FIV_{Bang}, FIV_{Aom1}, FIV_{Aom2}, FIV_{Pet}, and FIV_{Shi}.

15. The cell line, according to claim 13, wherein said cell line is designated FeT-J.

16. A method for detecting or determining the quantity of FIV viral neutralization antibodies in a sample, comprising contacting said sample with FIV, then culturing a cell line of claim 10 in said sample for an effective amount of time, culturing said cells in fresh culture media and then determining the amount of reverse transcriptase activity in said culture media.

17. The method, according to claim 16, wherein said cell line is selected from the group consisting of cell lines designated as FeT-1C and FeT-J.